Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Region One
490 North Meridian Rd.
Kalispell, MT 59901
(406) 752-5501
FAX: 406-257-0349
Ref:DV296.95
March 30, 1995

TO: Environmental Quality Council, Capitol Building, Helena, 59620-1704
Department of Health & Environmental Sciences, Director's Office, Room C108, Cogswell Bldg., Helena, 59620-0901
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
Director's Office
Wildlife Division
Lands Section
Legal Unit
Montana Historical Society, State Historic Preservation Office, 225 North Roberts, Veteran's Memorial Building, Helena, 59620-1201
Montana State Library, 1515 East Sixth Avenue, Helena, 59620-1800
Jim Jensen, Montana Environmental Information Center, PO Box 1184, Helena, 59624
George Ochenski, PO Box 689, Helena, 59624

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am enclosing copies of Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, Region One completed Environmental Assessments (EA) for the 1995-1999 farming program at the Ninepipe and Pablo Wildlife Management Areas for your information.

Sincerely,

Dan Vincent
Regional Supervisor

/nb

Enclosure

CHECKLIST EA

PART I. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION

1. **Type of Proposed State Action** Reinstatement of sharefarming contract with provisions to reduce total acreage by reverting certain fields to perennial herbaceous cover

2. **Agency Authority for the Proposed Action** Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

3. **Name of Project** Ninepipe Sharefarming Agreement

4. **Name, Address and Phone Number of Project Sponsor (if other than the agency)**

5. **If Applicable:**

   Estimated Construction/Commencement Date 20 March 1995
   Estimated Completion Date 28 February 2000
   Current Status of Project Design (% complete) 100%

6. **Location Affected by Proposed Action (county, range and township)**
   Lake County, Sections 2, 3, and 4 in Township 19 North, Range 20 West and Sections 26, 27, 33, and 35 in Township 20 North, Range 20 West

7. **Project Size: Estimate the number of acres that would be directly affected that are currently:**

   (a) Developed:
   residential ..... __ acres
   industrial ..... __ acres

   (b) Open Space/Woodlands/
   Recreation ..... __ acres

   (c) Wetlands/Riparian
   Areas ..... __ acres

   (d) Floodplain ..... __ acres

   (e) Productive:
   irrigated cropland ..... __ acres
   dry cropland ..... 880 acres
   forestry ..... __ acres
   rangeland ..... __ acres
   other ..... __ acres

8. **Map/site plan: attach an original 8 1/2" x 11" or larger section of the most recent USGS 7.5' series topographic map showing the location and boundaries of the area that would be affected by the proposed action. A different map scale may be substituted if more appropriate or if required by agency rule. If available, a site plan should also be attached.**

Rev.

9. **Narrative Summary of the Proposed Action or Project including the Benefits and Purpose of the Proposed Action.**

The purpose of the proposed action is to manage vegetation on farmland acreage at Ninepipe Wildlife Management Area using a civilian farmer to provide food and cover for wildlife and to control noxious weeds. Proposal has been structured to scale back the acreage which was recently in annual crops.

Project will commence with preparation of a seedbed on approximately 430 acres, then planting spring wheat and spring barley on all but 114 acres which will be seeded to a mixture of grasses and legumes. Approximately 320 acres will be summer fallowed to prepare for fall seeding of winter wheat. In subsequent years winter wheat will be the primary crop. Noxious weeds will be controlled in crops using herbicide sprays.

As compensation for use of the property, the farmer will leave unharvested in the fields a portion of the grain crop each year.

This will accomplish a management goal of providing an abundant and nutritious food source for waterfowl, ring-necked pheasants, and other wildlife. Acreage planted to grass/legume mix will increase the amount of perennial nesting habitat available on the WMA for game species and other birds while increasing soil fertility and decreasing potential for erosion.

10. **Listing of any other Local, State or Federal agency that has overlapping or additional jurisdiction.**

(a) Permits:

Agency Name	Permit	Date Filed/#
N/A		

(b) Funding:

Agency Name	Funding Amount
N/A	

(c) Other Overlapping or Additional Jurisdictional Responsibilities:

Agency Name	Type of Responsibility
N/A	

11. **List of Agencies Consulted During Preparation of the EA:**
MSU Extension Service
Consolidated Farm Service Agency
Natural Resource Conservation Service
US Fish & Wildlife Service

PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

A. Evaluation of the Impacts of the Proposed Action Including Secondary and Cumulative Impacts on the Physical and Human Environment:

YSICAL ENVIRONMENT

1. LAND RESOURCES Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACTS				Can Impacts Be Mitigated*	Comment Index
	Unknown*	None	Minor*	Potentially Significant*		
a. Soil instability or changes in geologic substructure?			X		N/A	1.a.
b. Disruption, displacement, erosion, compection, moisture loss, or over-covering of soil which would raduce productivity or fertility?			X		N/A	1.b.
c. Destruction, covering or modificetion of eny unique geologic or physicel features?		X				
d. Chenges in siltation, deposition or erosion petterns that mey modify the channel of e river or streem or the bed or shore of a lake?		X				
e. Other: _						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondery Effects on Lend Resources (Attach edditionel pages of narrative if needed):
1.a. By reducing the total number of ecres under intensive cultivation, stability of soil would be increased.

1.b. Fertility of soil would increase in ereas where perenniel cover is plented beceuse of the nitrogen fixing ettribute of the legumes to be included in the seeding mix.

HYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

2. AIR Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACTS				Can Impacts Be Mitigated*	Comment Index
	Unknown*	None	Minor*	Potentially Significant*		
a. Emission of eir pollutants or deterioretion of embiant eir quelity?			X		No	2.a.
b. Creation of objectioneble odors?		X				
c. Alteration of air movement, moisture or tempereture petterns, or any change in climate, either locelly or regionelly?		X				
d. Adverse effects on vegetation, including crops, due to increesed emissions of pollutants?		X				
e. Other: _						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondery Effects on Air Resources (Attach edditionel pages of narrative if needed):
2.a. Operation of diesel powered ferm aquipment results in short-term, minor degredation of air quality from exhaust emissions.

*Include an attachment with a narrative explenation describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT (continued)

3. WATER Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACTS				Can Impacts Be Mitigated*	Comment Index
	Unknown*	None	Minor*	Potentially Significant*		
a. Discharge into surface water or any alteration of surface water quality including but not limited to temperature, dissolved oxygen, turbidity or pathogens?			X		N/A	3.a.
b. Changes in drainage patterns or the rate and amount of surface runoff?			X		N/A	3.b.
c. Alteration of the course or magnitude of flood water or other flows?		X				
d. Changes in the amount of surface water in any water body or creation of a new water body?		X				
e. Exposure of people or property to water related hazards such as flooding?		X				
f. Changes in the quality of groundwater?		X				
g. Changes in the quantity of groundwater?		X				
h. Increase in the risk of contamination of surface or groundwater?		X				
i. Violation of the Montana Non Degradation Statute?		X				
j. Effects on any existing water right or reservation?		X				
k. Effects on other water users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quality?		X				
l. Effects on other users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quantity?		X				
m. Other: _						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Air Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):
3.a. Risk of increased turbidity of surface water due to particulates in runoff would be lessened because of a reduction in tilled acreage and interceptive capabilities of sod forming species in perennial cover plantings.

3.b. Potential rate and amount of surface runoff would be reduced by reduction in tillad acreage.

*Include an attachment with a narrative explanation describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT (continued)

4. VEGETATION Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT				Can Impacts Be Mitigated*	Comment Index
	Unknown*	None	Minor*	Potentially Significant*		
a. Changes in the diversity, productivity or abundance of plant species (including treas, shrubs, grass, crops, and aquatic plants)?			X		N/A	4.a.
b. Alteration of a plent community?			X		N/A	4.b.
c. Adverse effects on eny unique, rare, threatened, or endangered plent species?		X				
d. Reduction in acreage or productivity of any agricultural land?			X		N/A	4.c.
e. Esteblishment or spread of noxious weeds?			X		N/A	4.d.
f. Other: _						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Vegetation Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):
4.a. Diversity of plant species would be increased in fields that are converted from annual cropland to perennial cover.

4.b. Plant species composition in affected acreage is almost entirely domestic and exotic species and annual invaders due to the long farming history. Proposed action will result in perpetuation of desirable species.

4.c. The intent of proposed action is to reduce the acreage in cereal grain production and to plant perennial grasses and legumes which will occasionally be harvested as a hay crop.

4.d. Proposed action would result in a raduction in the astablishmant and spread of noxious weeds through intensive vegetation management.

The cumulative effects of the proposed action on the vegetetion resource will be that farmland acreage at the Ninepipe Wildlife Management Area will be beneficial. Fields will be mainteined in a productive condition where desireble plant species are nurtured end noxious weeds are controlled.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

5. FISH/WILDLIFE Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated*	Comment Index
	Unknown*	None	Minor*	Potentially Significant*		
a. Deterioretion of criticel fish or wildlife habitet?		X				
b. Chenges in the diversity or ebundence of geme enimals or bird species?			X		N/A	5.b.
c. Chenges in the diversity or ebundance of nongeme species?			X		N/A	5.c.
d. Introduction of new species into an eree?		X				
e. Creetion of a barrier to the migration or movement of animals?		X				
f. Adverse effects on eny unique, rere, threetened, or endengered species?		X				
g. Increase in conditions that stress wildlife populetions or limit ebundence (including herassment, legal or illegal hervest or other humen activity)?		X				
h. Other: _						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attech additionel peges of narrative if needed):
5.b. Perennial cover is a more dependable nesting habitet for ducks and pheasants which could result greater productivity if nesting habitat was limiting. These species will also nest in grain fields. The relative success of nesting hens in these 2 habitats at Ninepipe is unknown. Reducing the emount of food evalleble through e reduction in grain production will not negetively impact geme enimal abundance because reduction is not of a degree to permit food to be a factor limiting their populations.

5.c. Diversity of non-game species will not be impacted except on a very localized scale. Short-eared owls, northern harriers, and western meadowlarks would have a more secure habitat for nesting in perennial grass fields than they would in grain fields. It has not been shown, however, that populations on the WMA are limited by nesting habitat.

*Include an attachment with a narrative explanation describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

6. NOISE/ELECTRICAL EFFECTS Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated*	Comment Index
	Unknown*	None	Minor*	Potentially Significant*		
a. Increases in existing noise levels?		X				
b. Exposure of people to serve or nuisance noise levels?		X				
c. Creation of electrostatic or electromagnetic effects that could be detrimental to human health or property?		X				
d. Interference with radio or television reception and operation?		X				
e. Other: __						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

7. LAND USE Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated*	Comment Index
	Unknown*	None	Minor*	Potentially Significant*		
a. Alteration of or interference with the productivity or profitability of the existing land use of an area?			X		N/A	7.a.
b. Conflicted with a designated natural area or area of unusual scientific or educational importance?		X				
c. Conflict with any existing land use whose presence would constrain or potentially prohibit the proposed action?		X				
d. Adverse effects on or relocation of residences?		X				
e. Other: __						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):
7.a. Productivity and profitability of the land will be reversibly impacted slightly by growing what could be a hay crop on what was recently used for cereal grain production.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

8. RISK/HEALTH HAZARDS Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT*				Can Impact Be Mitigated*	Comment Index
	Unknown*	None	Minor*	Potentially Significant*		
a. Risk of an explosion or release of hazardous substances (including, but not limited to oil, pesticides, chemicals, or radiation) in the event of an accident or other forms of disruption?			X		No	8.a.
b. Affect an existing emergency response or emergency evacuation plan or create a need for a new plan?		X				
c. Creation of any human health hazard or potential hazard?		X				
d. Other: Increased risk of wildfire?			X		No	8.d.

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):
8.a. Risk of spilling petroleum or herbicides in the event of an accident exists but is minor. Initiation of proposed action does not significantly change the risk above that of other possible alternatives.

8.d. Summer fallow fields and fields in which new grain is growing are resistant to burning and serve as effective fire breaks which is not the case for perennial cover fields managed as nesting cover.

*Include an attachment with a narrative explanation describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

9. COMMUNITY IMPACT Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT*				Can Impact Be Mitigated*	Comment Index
	Unknown*	None	Minor*	Potentially Significant*		
a. Alteration of the location, distribution, density, or growth rate of human population of an area?		X				
b. Alteration of the social structure of a community?		X				
c. Alteration of the level or distribution of employment or community or personal income?		X				
d. Changes in industrial or commercial activity?			X		N/A	9.d.
e. Increased traffic hazards or effects on existing transportation facilities or patterns of movement of people and goods?		X				
f. Other: ___						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):
9.d. Proposed action reduces the commercial involvement of a grain farmer slightly from the past, but correspondingly increases the potential involvement of a commercial hay contractor.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

10. PUBLIC SERVICES/TAXES/UTILITIES Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT*				Can Impact Be Mitigated*	Comment Index
	Unknown*	None	Minor*	Potentially Significant*		
a. Have an effect upon or result in a need for new or altered governmental services in any of the following areas: fire or police protection, schools, parks/recreational facilities, roads or other public maintenance, water supply, sewer or septic systems, solid waste disposal, health, or other governmental services? If any, specify:		X				
b. Have an effect upon the local or state tax base and revenues?		X				
c. Result in a need for new facilities or substantial alterations of any of the following utilities: electric power, natural gas, other fuel supply or distribution systems, or communications?		X				
d. Result in increased used of any energy source?		X				
e. Other: ___						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

11. AESTHETICS/RECREATION Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT*				Can Impact Be Mitigated*	Comment Index
	Unknown*	None	Minor*	Potentially Significant*		
a. Alteration of any scenic vista or creation of an aesthetically offensive site or effect that is open to public view?		X				
b. Alteration of the aesthetic character of a community or neighborhood?			X		N/A	11.b
c. Alteration of the quality or quantity of recreational/tourism opportunities and settings? (Attach Tourism Report)		X				
d. Other: ___						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):
11.b. A reduction in summer fallow reletive to historic emounts will improve the aesthetic character of the erea to those opposed to farming on the WMA.

*Include an attachment with a narrative explanation describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT (continued)

12. CULTURAL/HISTORICAL RESOURCES Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT				Can Impacts Be Mitigated*	Comment Index
	Unknown*	None	Minor*	Potentially Significant*		
a. Destruction or alteration of any site, structure or object of prehistoric, historic, or paleontological importence?		X				
b. Physical change that would effect unique culturel or historic values?		X				
c. Effects on existing religious or sacred uses of a site or area?		X				
d. Other: _						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumuletive and Secondery Effects on Culturel/Historical Resources (Attech additionel peges of narrative if needed):

SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

13. SUMMARY EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE Will the proposed action, considered as a whole:	IMPACT				Can Impacts Be Mitigated*	Comment Index
	Unknown*	None	Minor*	Potentially Significant*		
a. Have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (A project or progrem may result in impacts on two or more seperete resources which create e significant effect when considered together or in totel.)		X				
b. Involve potential risks or adverse effects which ere uncertain but extremely hazerdous if they were to occur?		X				
c. Potentially conflict with the substentive requirements of any local, stete, or federal law, regulation, standard or formal plan?		X				
d. Establish a precedent or likelihood that future ections with significant environmental impects will be proposed?		X				
e. Generate substantial debate or controversy ebout the neture of the impects that would be created?		X				
f. Other: _						

Narrative Description and Evaluetion of the Cumulative end Secondary Effects on Culturel/Historical Resources (Attach edditionel peges of narretive if needed):

*Include an attachment with a narrative explanation describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW (Continued)

1. Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives (including the no action alternative) to the proposed action whenever alternatives are reasonably available and prudent to consider and a discussion of how the alternatives would be implemented:

Alternative A. No action. Continue with sharefarming at current level.

Alternative B. Proposed action. Initiate sharefarming contract similar to previous contracts, but with provisions to plant perennial cover on some units.

Alternative C. Decrease amount of grain farming further. Convert larger acreage of annual cropland to perennial cover.

Alternative D. Discontinue sharefarming. Manage farmland with FWP manpower and equipment and/or hire custom farmers to perform necessary annual activities.

ANALYSIS

Alternative A. No action. A greater amount of land would be under annual cultivation which may allow greater potential for erosion and surface water turbidity. Less land would be in perennial cover available for nesting.

Alternative B. Proposed action. Management goals to provide food and cover for wildlife and to control noxious weeds will be met while providing agricultural opportunities and economic benefits to the local community.

Alternative C. Decrease amount of grain farming further. Land use patterns in the Mission Valley near the WMA have shown a prolonged and continued change from growing cereal grain crops to raising beef cattle. FWP is virtually the only landowner near Ninepipe Reservoir that produces grain annually. Pheasants and many waterfowl species depend on grain as a major portion of their diet. Populations of these species and hunter opportunities would decline if grain production on the WMA were significantly reduced. Also, those farmers who continue to grow grain in the valley would likely experience an increase in crop depredation from waterfowl.

Alternative D. Discontinue sharefarming. In order to provide sufficient food to maintain abundant populations of wildlife, a significant increase in the annual project budget would be mandatory. FWP would be in direct competition with private enterprise for grain markets, and participation and support from the local community would suffer.

2. Evaluation and listing of mitigation, stipulation, or other control measures enforceable by the agency or another government agency:

Mitigation is unnecessary or impossible. Most consequences of Proposed Action are beneficial. Short-term degradation of air quality by diesel exhaust is inevitable. Inherent risks of accidental spills of fuel or herbicides cannot be mitigated, but they will be cleaned up promptly if they occur.

3. Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an EIS required? NO If an EIS is not required, explain why the EA is the appropriate level of analysis for this proposed action.

Based on the review of the impacts of the proposed action and the reasonable alternatives, it was determined that an EIS is not required. Local resource management agencies consulted during planning of the proposed action concurred that no detrimental environmental consequences would result from its implementation.

4. Describe the level of public involvement for this project, if any, and, given the complexity and the seriousness of the environmental issues associated with the proposed action, is the level of public involvement appropriate under the circumstances?

None. This project continues a practice that began in the 1950s when the property was purchased by FWP.

5. Duration of comment period, if any: N/A

6. Name, title, address, and phone number of the person(s) responsible for preparing the EA:
John Grant, Wildlife Biologist, 7302 Fish Hatchery Road, Charlo, MT 59824 (406) 644-2510

PART III. NARRATIVE EVALUATION AND COMMENT

Sharefarming has been used as a management tool at Ninepipe WMA since FWP first began acquiring the land in the 1950s. Its beneficial consequences include providing food to support abundant bird populations and controlling noxious weeds while maintaining agricultural opportunities and economic benefits to the local community. Implementation of the Proposed Action will ensure that these benefits continue, but will include the additional benefit of reducing potential risks to soil and water resources by taking a portion of the acreage out of annual cultivation and planting perennial herbaceous cover.

Cumulative and secondary effects of the Proposed Action are all beneficial. None of the resources evaluated will be impacted detrimentally in cumulative or secondary ways.

Selection of any other alternative would not provide the scope of benefits as the Proposed Action. Detrimental effects on air quality from exhaust emissions and risks of potential spill of petroleum or herbicides are similar for all reasonable alternatives.

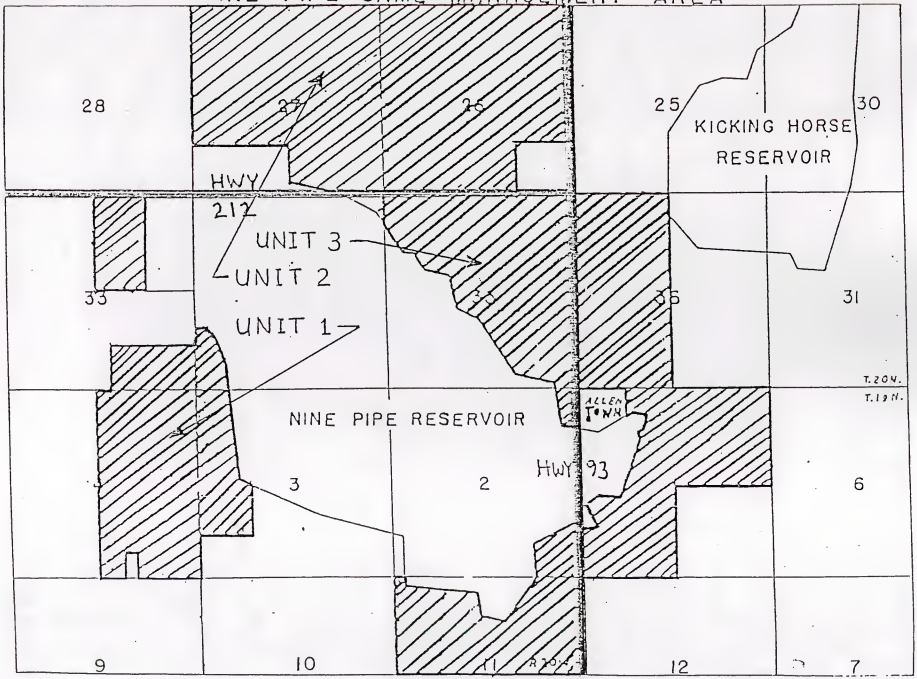
PART IV. EA CONCLUSION SECTION

Based on the review of the impacts of the proposed action and the reasonable alternatives, it was determined that an EIS is not required. Local resource management agencies consulted during planning of the proposed action concurred that no detrimental environmental consequences would result from its implementation.

EA Approved _____ 3/29/95

Dan Vincent, Regional Supervisor — Date

REF:9PIPE-SF.EA
March 24, 1995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UNIT 3
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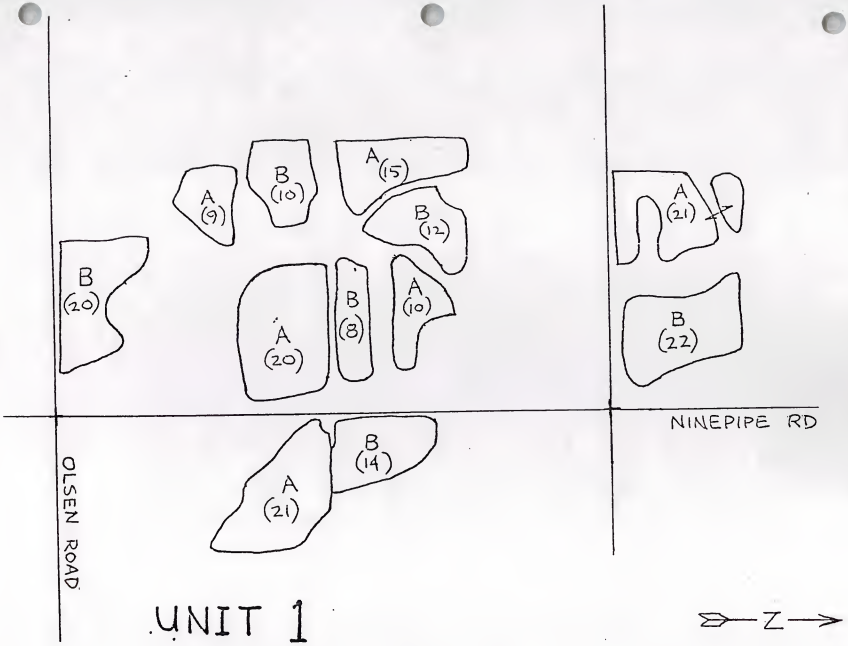
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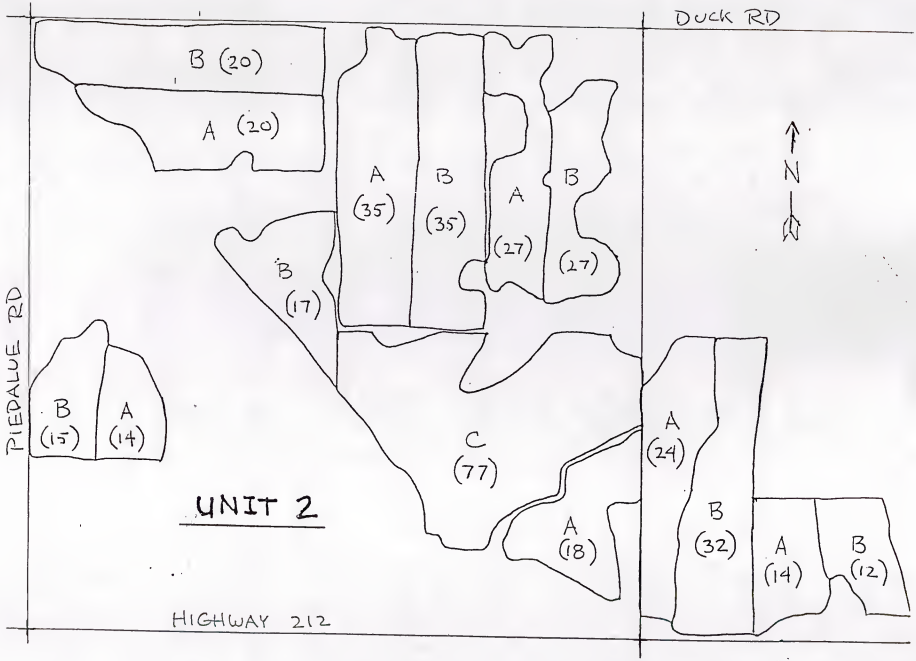
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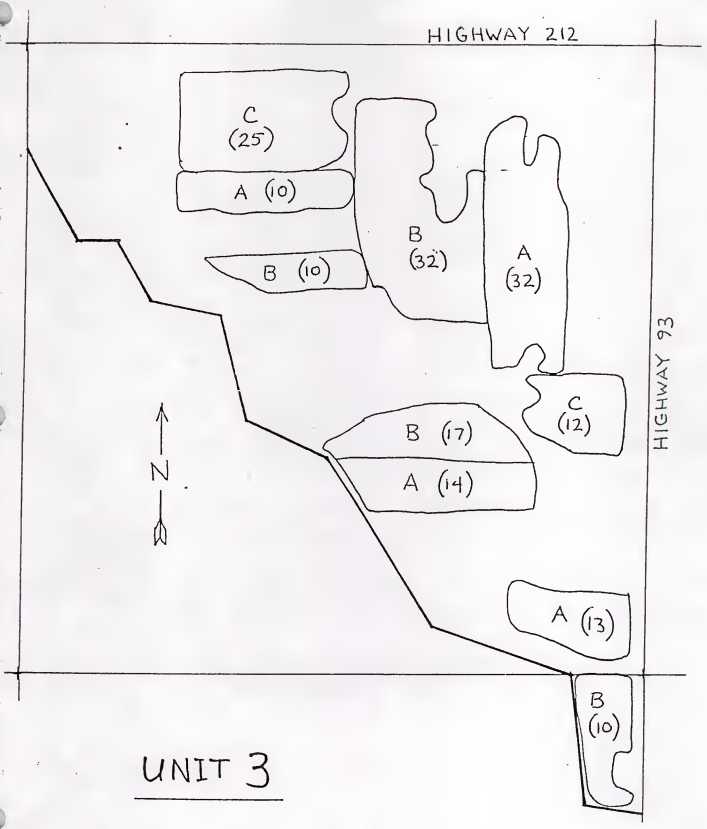
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UNIT 3